

LISTENING IN AROUND THE CLOCK

Spy's role

CIA 4 CANADA

(orig. under Eayrs)

is 'bad for Canada'

By James Eayrs

"Gentlemen do not read each other's mail." So the incoming U.S. secretary of state, Henry L. Stimson, expostulated in 1929 on learning to his horror that the United States government, through an agency nicknamed the American Black Chamber, had since the end of World War I systematically intercepted and decoded the secret messages of foreign powers.

The main in charge was a flamboyant character named Herbert Osborne Yardley—an E. Howard Hunt with brains—whom devotees of the spy culture will recognize as cryptology's Newton or Galileo.

Yardley was not one to play down the importance of his contribution. "Though the blinds are drawn and the windows heavily curtained, the far-seeing eyes of the Black Chamber penetrate the secret conference chambers at Washington, Tokyo, London, Paris, Geneva, Rome. Its sensitive ears catch the faintest whisperings in the foreign capitals of the world."

But Secretary Stimson would have none of all this espionage. He didn't want to know. He did not need to know. People who listened at keyholes only get earache. Gentlemen do not read each other's mail. So Stimson withdrew state department funding, and the Black Chamber had to shup up shop.

Hired by Canada

After a decade of drifting, Yardley reopened for business in 1940. His employer this time was not Uncle Sam but Johnny Canuck. The Canadian government had hired him to set up our very own cryptanalytic bureau.

We did not call it the Canadian Black Chamber, only the communications branch of the National Research Council (CBNRC). It dealt with German codes and Nazi spies. But Yardley was not permitted to guide CBNRC's wartime work.

"He was reportedly forced out," writes David Kahn (on whose book *The Codebreakers* I rely for these details) "under pressure either from Stimson, then secretary of war, or from the British." But his

Canadian employers, according to Kahn, "did not want to part with him."

After World War II, CBNRC broadened its horizons. In 1947, so secretly that the then prime minister seems not to have known what was going on, CBNRC brought Canada into what has been unsympathetically described as "a white Anglo-Saxon Protestant communications intelligence dictatorship of the 'free world'." (On the rare occasions when reference is made to it in public—never by officials the arrangement is called "the UKUSA treaty"; but no constitutional lawyer could regard so furtive a transaction as creating formal treaty obligations—which is why Prime Minister Trudeau could tell Parliament without bald-facedly lying to it that "We are not a party to such a treaty".)

The 1947 intelligence linkage was first disclosed in 1971. Ramparts Magazine published a lengthy interview about U.S. electronic espionage with a former analyst of the U.S. National Security Agency (NSA).

Giant spy complex

NSA is the lineal descendant of the Black Chamber, but there is little resemblance between Yardley's modest headquarters and the giant complex at Fort George G. Meade with its 20,000 employees, its basement of computers, its two million square feet of space for files and tapes and print-outs.

Yardley's Black Chamber might decipher a message between the Tokyo foreign office and the Japanese delegate to the Washington disarmament conference, and dine out on the achievement. NSA routinely monitors all the gossip of the Global Village generally, whether on the wire or in the ether. "Interception goes on around the clock, at every wavelength, for every audible transmission, of every single country."

CBNRC is NSA's branch plant in Canada. A fortnight ago, a CBC television documentary film called "The Fifth Estate" offered intriguing details about this "American intelligence connection.

From Alert and other Far Northern sites, manned ostensibly to detect the approach of enemy bombers and missiles but really listening in to the Soviet communications network, are fed to Ottawa and thence to NSA at Fort Meade myriads of facts of

military life within the region under their surveillance. "As far as the Soviet Union is concerned," the ex-NSA witness testifies, "we know the whereabouts at any given time of all its aircraft and its naval forces, including its missile-firing submarines. We know what every one of their VIPs is doing, and generally their capabilities and the dispositions of their forces. This information is constantly computer-correlated, updated, and the operations go on 24 hours a day."

CBNRC also monitors the chatter of the Ottawa diplomatic corps for NSA's edification.

Hewer of intelligence

Not that NSA seems especially grateful for our help. "Among the first and second parties"—the first party is NSA, we're one of the second, along with the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand—"there is supposed to be a general agreement not to restrict data," the ex-NSA analyst tells us. "Of course it doesn't work out this way in practice. . . the treaty is a one-way street. We violate it even with our second-party allies by monitoring their communications constantly. . . These allies can't maintain security even if they want to. They're all working with machines we gave them. There's no chance for them to be on par with us technologically."

So Canada spies for her American ally. Canada is clandestinely tied to the U.S. intelligence community—an acolyte at the American temple of espionage, a hewer and drawer not of wood and water only, but of such highly-prized commodities as SIGINT ("signals intelligence") and COMINT ("communications intelligence").

Yes—for several reasons.

Most of the data purveyed through

continued